

S-506
J. C. W. Tawes & Son
Crisfield
Private

c. 1920

The J. C. W. Tawes & Son seafood packinghouse, located in the "Brooklyn" section of Crisfield, contains a fragment of an early twentieth-century frame oyster house that was reduced in size around 1930, and about the same time, improved with a rusticated block addition built for processing oysters as well as crabs. The frame section dates around 1920 and is the oldest frame packinghouse structure known to remain in Crisfield. The frame and concrete block sections have remained essentially intact since the mid twentieth century, and the building contributes to the historic entrance of the Somers' Cove entrance as a long-standing architectural form built atop man-made land filled with oyster shell.

James Cornelius Wesley (J.C.W.) Tawes established a seafood company in Crisfield in 1908. He became one of the richest men in the city and a director of the Bank of Crisfield. The 1911 Sanborn Insurance map shows the J.C.W. Tawes crab house as a large building with a plank wharf on made land at the foot of 10th Street next to the drawbridge that spanned the entrance to Somers' Cove. By the time the 1923 map was issued the extant portion of the current packinghouse has been built with its principal gable-front façade oriented to the street. The building is distinctly evident in a c. 1920 aerial view of the Crisfield waterfront.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. S- 506

1. Name of Property

(indicate preferred name)

historic J. C. W. Tawes & Son Seafood
other

2. Location

street and number 206 South Tenth Street
city, town Crisfield
county Somerset
not for publication
vicinity

3. Owner of Property

(give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Allan Tyler
street and number P. O. Box 566
city, town Crisfield state Maryland zip code 21817
telephone 410-968-1288

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Somerset County Clerk of Court
city, town Princess Anne tax map 102 tax parcel 176 tax ID number 7-126786
liber 336 folio 462

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
☐ Other:

6. Classification

Category

☐ district
☒ building(s)
☐ structure
☐ site
☐ object

Ownership

☐ public
☒ private
☐ both

Current Function

☐ agriculture
☐ commerce/trade
☐ defense
☐ domestic
☐ education
☐ funerary
☐ government
☐ health care
☒ industry
☐ landscape
☐ recreation/culture
☐ religion
☐ social
☐ transportation
☐ work in progress
☐ unknown
☐ vacant/not in use
☐ other:

Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	
	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	Total

Number of Contributing Resources
previously listed in the Inventory

7. Description

Inventory No. S-506

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

J. C. W. Tawes & Son Seafood is located at 206 South Tenth Street in the 'Brooklyn' section of the City of Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland. The three-part frame and concrete block packinghouse stands at the east end of the street next to the harbor. The packinghouse faces south with the principal gable roof oriented on a north/south axis. According to the present owner, Allen Tyler, the oldest frame section was moved to this site.

Built in stages beginning around 1920, the packinghouse is fronted by a two-story, frame section supported on a poured concrete foundation and sheathed with vinyl siding. The medium pitched roof is covered with metal. Attached to the back of the frame section is a single-story, rusticated concrete block section that houses the steamer and picking room. Extending the building farther back is a slightly taller single-story concrete block addition built around 1980.

The south side of the frame section is a two-story gable-front elevation defined by an asymmetrical fenestration. The first floor is pierced by a combination of two door openings, and a pair of single-pane window sash that flank the westernmost door, which opens into the packing room. The second floor is pierced by an off-center window opening fitted with a three-pane light. The gable end is finished with a slightly extended eave with an enclosed soffit.

The east side of the frame section is partially covered by a single-story shed roofed section that is extended farther by an open shed roofed porch. Piercing the wall above the shed roof to light the upper floor of the frame section are two rectangular, single-pane windows. The edge of the roof is finished with a boxed cornice. A metal hoist with a pulley system is fixed to the edge of the dock to aid in the loading and unloading of cargo. The west side of the frame section is covered partially by a single-story shed roofed addition executed in rusticated concrete block. The rusticated block section houses a cooler. Fixed atop the shed roof of the cooler is a frame enclosure sheathed with vinyl siding supported on steel I-beams.

The north side of the early twentieth-century frame section is covered largely by the single-story rusticated concrete block addition that houses the steam room and picking room. Covered by a medium pitched metal roof, the concrete wall on the west side is pierced by a series of rectangular window openings filled with replacement windows. A metal stove pipe exits from the wall. The east side facing the harbor is sheltered by an extension of the shed roofed porch, which protects a double-door entrance into the steam room. Metal vents pierce the roofline. The north side of the rusticated block section is covered by a slightly taller addition erected of plain surfaced concrete blocks and covered by a medium pitched roof of tin. The modern addition is used for storage. Located on the east side of the modern addition are tiers of soft-shell crab shedding tanks.

The interior is finished with a poured concrete floor of various slopes and levels indicating it was poured in stages. The front canning and packing room contains an old Continental Can Company canner within a low ceiling room supported by a braced post. The ceiling is covered with board and the seams between the boards are covered in narrow strips. The packing room has a vertical board inner wall, and the room is painted in a two-tone color scheme. There is also a pass-through to the picking room directly in back, which is located in the rusticated concrete block section. The picking room has a sloped, poured concrete floor, board ceiling, and a two-tone paint scheme. Directly east of the packing room is the steam room, which is fitted with circular boiler where the crabs are cooked. A metal pivot hoist moves the circular crab container into the vertically designed steamer. Directly

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adjacent to the steam room is the cooling room, where the circular containers of crabs are suspended on a conveyor system to cool.

8. Significance

Inventory No. S-506

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Specific dates

Architect/Builder

Construction dates

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The J. C. W. Tawes & Son seafood packinghouse, located in the 'Brooklyn' section of Crisfield, contains a fragment of an early twentieth-century frame oyster house that was reduced in size around 1930, and around the same time, improved with a rusticated block addition built for processing oysters as well as crabs. The frame section dates around 1920 and is the oldest frame packinghouse structure known to remain standing in Crisfield. The frame and concrete block sections have remained essentially intact since the mid twentieth century, and it contributes to the historic nature of the harbor entrance as a long-standing architectural form built atop man-made land filled with oyster shell.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

James Cornelius Wesley (J.C.W.) Tawes established a seafood company in Crisfield, Maryland, in 1908. He became one of the richest men in Crisfield and a director of the Bank of Crisfield.¹ The 1911 Sanborn Insurance map shows the J. C. W. Tawes crab house as a large building with a plank wharf on made land at the foot of South 10th Street next to the drawbridge that spanned the entrance to Somers' Cove.² By the time the 1923 map was issued the extant packinghouse had been erected,³ and it is distinctly evident in a c. 1920 aerial view of the Crisfield waterfront.

In 1931, J. C. W. Tawes was one of the three largest seafood businesses in Crisfield. In September, between 700 and 800 crabmeat pickers (of whom 100 were white) from 22 crab-picking plants went on strike in the Crisfield area to protest wage reductions of \$.35 per gallon to \$.25 per gallon. Some packinghouse owners tentatively offered \$.30 but the offer was refused by the strikers. J.C.W. Tawes was quoted as saying that rather than submit to the strikers' demands he would sell out and leave Crisfield. Tawes wanted Mayor Bradshaw to order out the police, arm the citizens or order out the militia to protect the workers who were intimidated by a third party, mostly white, who threatened to kill or throw them overboard if they worked for \$.25 per gallon. The third party were oyster shuckers and their sympathizers who were preparing their own strike as the oyster

¹ *The Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia*, Vol. III, New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co. Inc., 1950, p. 125.

² Sanborn Insurance Map, 1911, microfilm at the Nabb Research Center.

³ Sanborn Insurance Map, 1923, microfilm at the Nabb Research Center.

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season began.⁴

In the spring of 1938, another crabmeat pickers strike lasted seven weeks. J.C.W. Tawes and seven other plants agreed to recognize the CIO affiliate, the United Cannery, Agricultural Packing and Allied Workers as the bargaining agent for their employees, and to pay the rate of \$.35 per gallon of picked crabmeat.⁵

J.C.W. Tawes' son, James C. W. Tawes became a partner in the business in 1942 after graduating with a law degree from Georgetown University.⁶

In 1948, AFL Meat Cutters & Butcher Workman Local 453 was the bargaining agent for J.C.W. Tawes & Son. In a union election 29 Tawes employees voted for the union and a closed shop with no votes against. The contract called for \$.85 per gallon for crabmeat. In March, packinghouse owners claimed that "pirates" in the industry had caused prices to go to \$1.00 per gallon but could only afford to pay \$.90. Workers went on strike to obtain \$1.00. In May, because of the low price in crabmeat markets, the packers at Crisfield were not handling crabmeat. In June, Crisfield packers claimed that because of the low price in crabmeat markets caused by southern pickers shipping into the Maryland area, they could not profitably operate their plants and could not meet the union's request for more money. The contract expired July 1 and was allowed to expire without negotiating a new one. Negotiations resumed in August on an individual company basis and by September, contracts had been signed by fifteen plants that established the price of \$1.00 per gallon for picked crabmeat.⁷

In 1950 the company employed 40 people packing seafood products. When J.C.W. Tawes retired in 1960, James C. W. Tawes became the full owner. In 1965 the company employed 31 people packing crabmeat.⁸

Tawes continued to operate the business until 1970 when he sold it to W. Cranston Tyler and his son-in-law Allan Tyler. The company packed crabmeat and hard crabs in 1973. The Tylers continue to operate the company under the original name of J.C.W. Tawes & Son.⁹ Allen Tyler and his wife Darlene Tyler also own and operate the Side Street Market and restaurant next to the J.C.W. Tawes packinghouse. In the late 1990s they employed sixteen shuckers during the oyster season to supply their seafood market and a few customers in Delaware and Pennsylvania. They also employed 20 to 22 black crab pickers during the crab season for their market and restaurant plus customers neighboring states. One white woman from Dorchester picks claws. In 2001, they employed only ten pickers.¹⁰

⁴ U. S. Department of Labor, United States Conciliation Service, September 15, 1931, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

⁵ *The Baltimore Sun*, May 10, 1938.

⁶ *The Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia*, Vol. III, p. 125.

⁷ Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Dispute Case Files, File No. 482-603, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

⁸ *Directory of Maryland Manufacturers 1965-1966*, Maryland Department of Economic Development, p. 235.

⁹ Woodrow T. Wilson, *Crisfield, Maryland 1676-1976*, Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1977, p. 486.

¹⁰ Conversation with Allen Tyler, Crisfield, Maryland, January 23, 2002.

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J. C. W. Tawes Seafood
Tenth Street
Crisfield, Somerset County, Maryland
Chain of title

Map 102, Parcel 176

336/462

William C. Tyler, Sr.
William C. Tyler, Jr.
Norman Allen Tyler

to

2/14/11983

Norman Allen Tyler
Darlene Tyler

Lots 8 and 9 and the rear 30' of Lot 2 on a plat entitled Plat No. 2
of the N.Y.P. & N. R. R. Wharf property surveyed for Prentiss W. Evans
attorney, 12/10/1951, Plat Book 3/31

271/642

Elma Evans Windsor

to

3/23/1973

William C. Tyler, Sr.
William C. Tyler, Jr.
Norman Allen Tyler

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Interview with Allen Tyler, January 23, 2002
Somerset County Land Records, various volumes, Somerset County Courthouse
(For full list of resources see footnotes)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	.33 acre
Acreage of historical setting	.33 acre
Quadrangle name	Crisfield, Maryland

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The historic metes and bounds of this property are coincidental with the current boundary of the lot.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian and Virginia Jenkins, Business Historian, CBMM		
organization	Private Consultant	date	1/23/2002
street & number	P. O. Box 5	telephone	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	state	Maryland 21871

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

Scale of Feet.

Somers

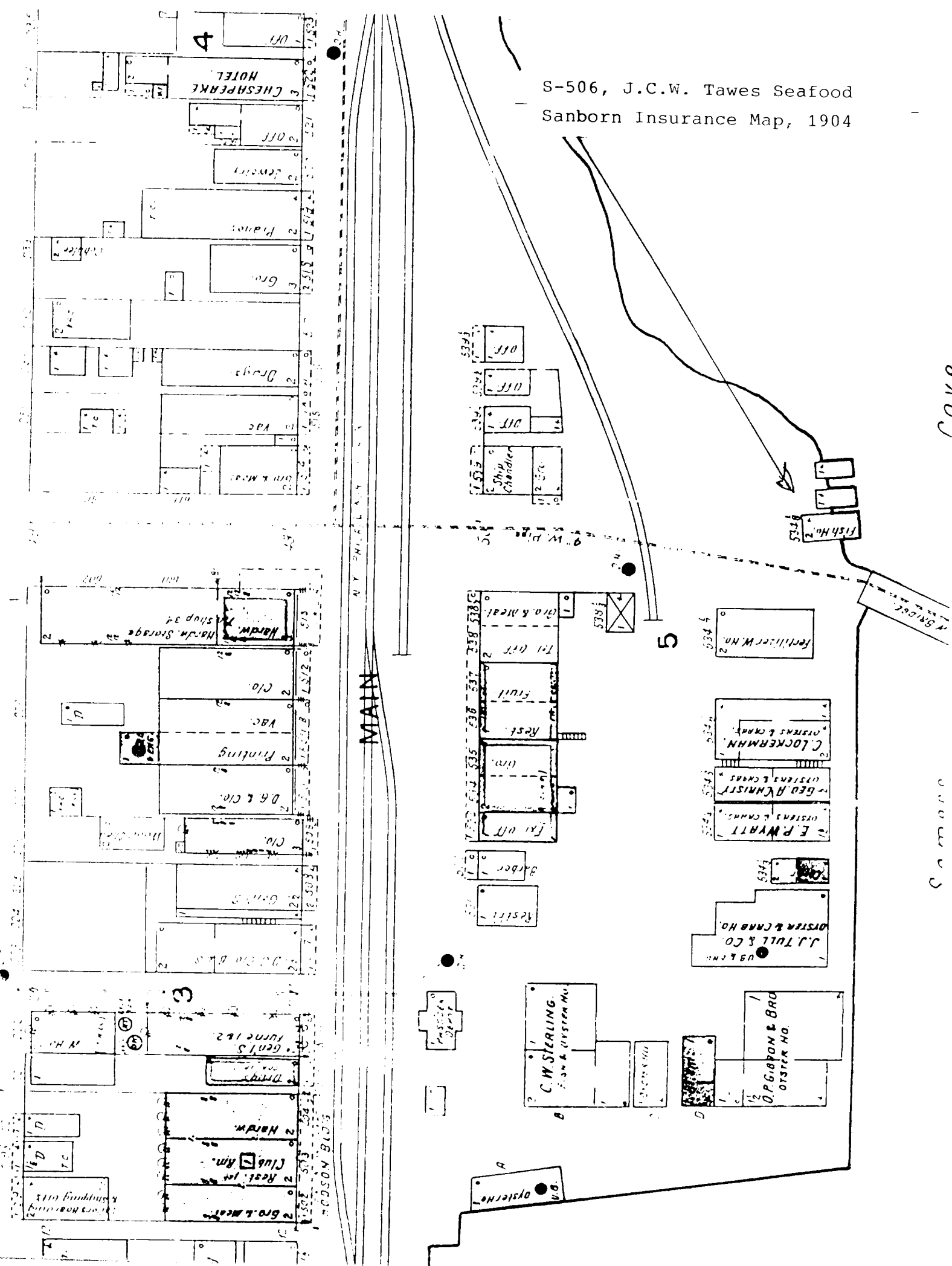
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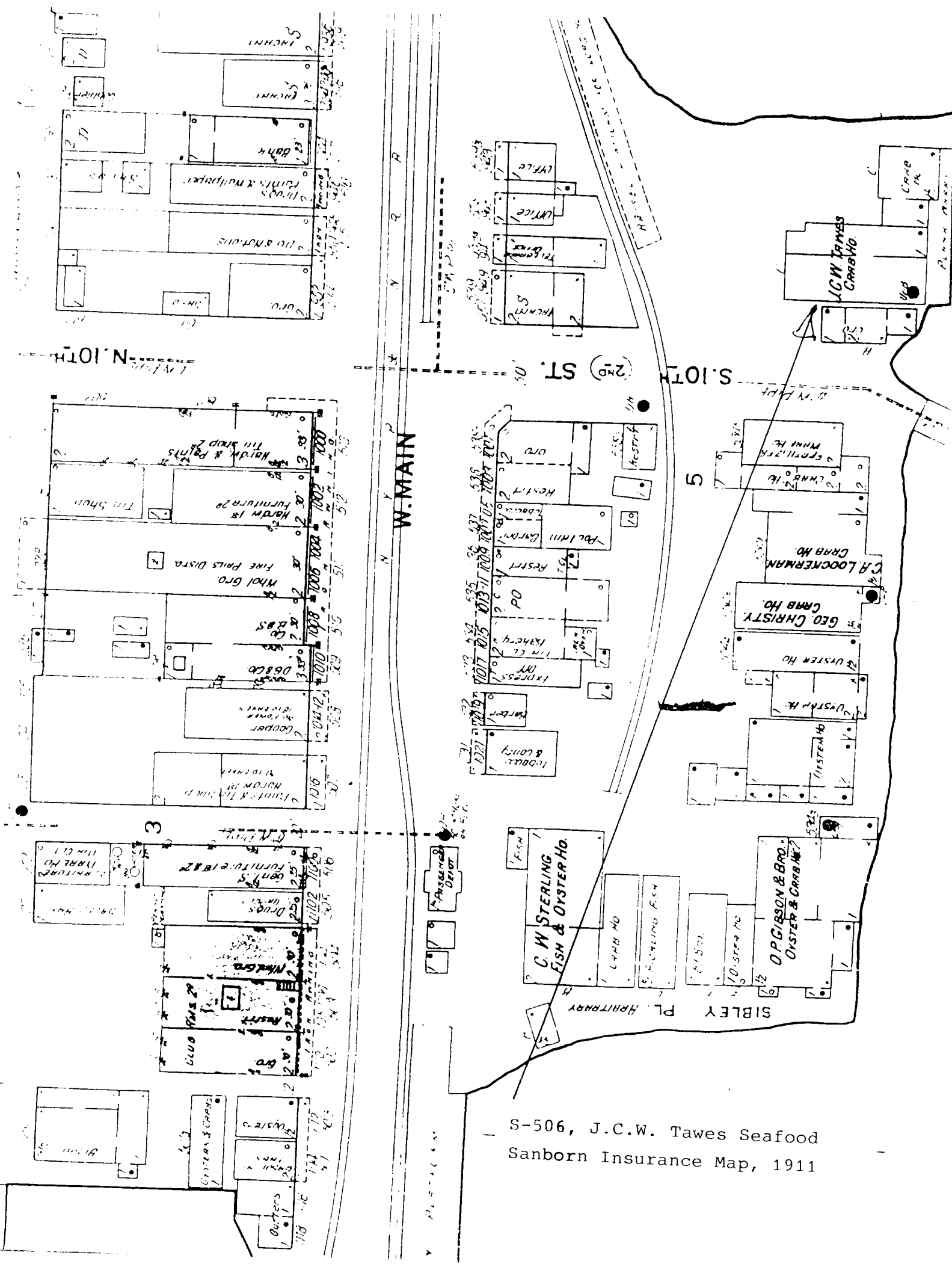
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Convo

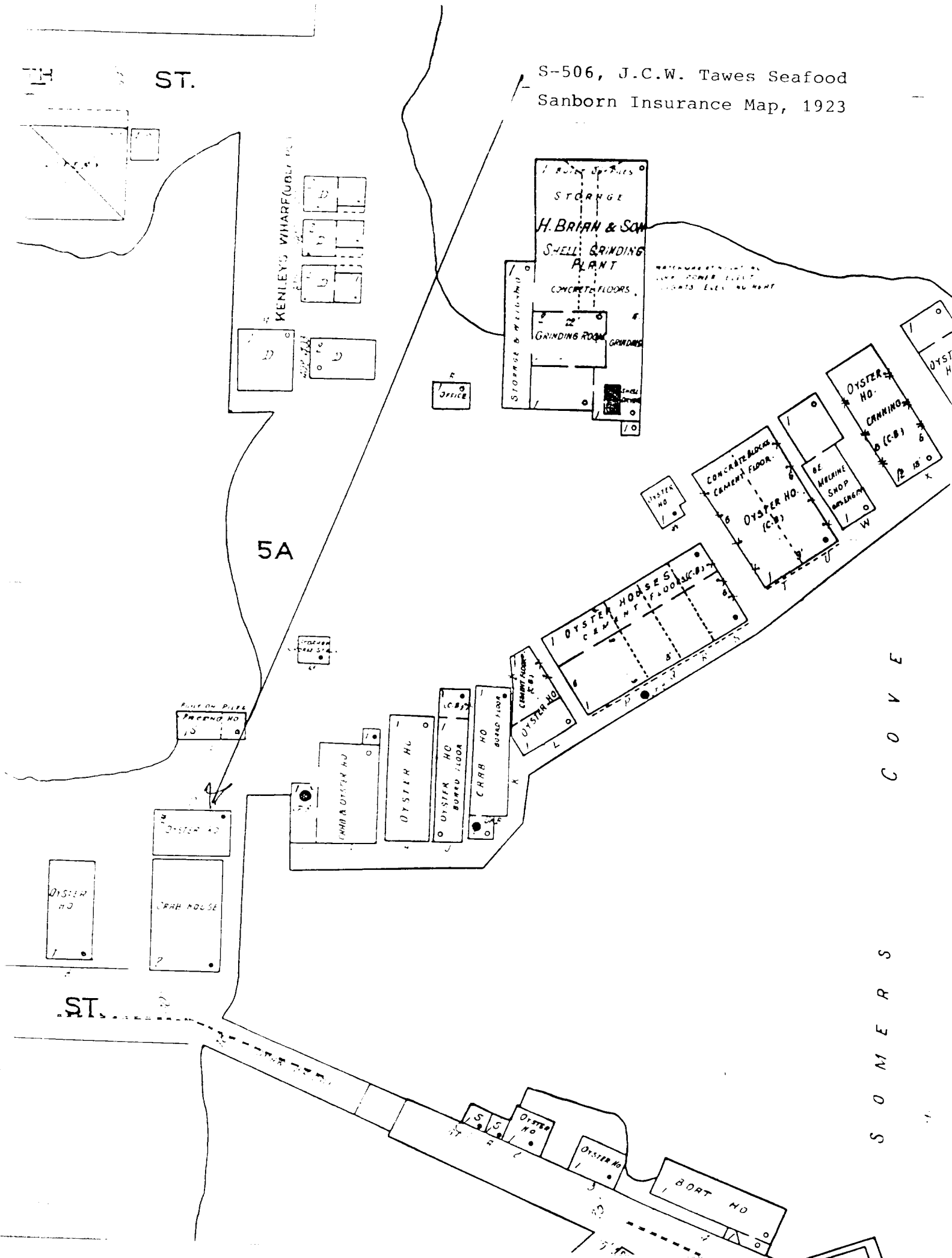
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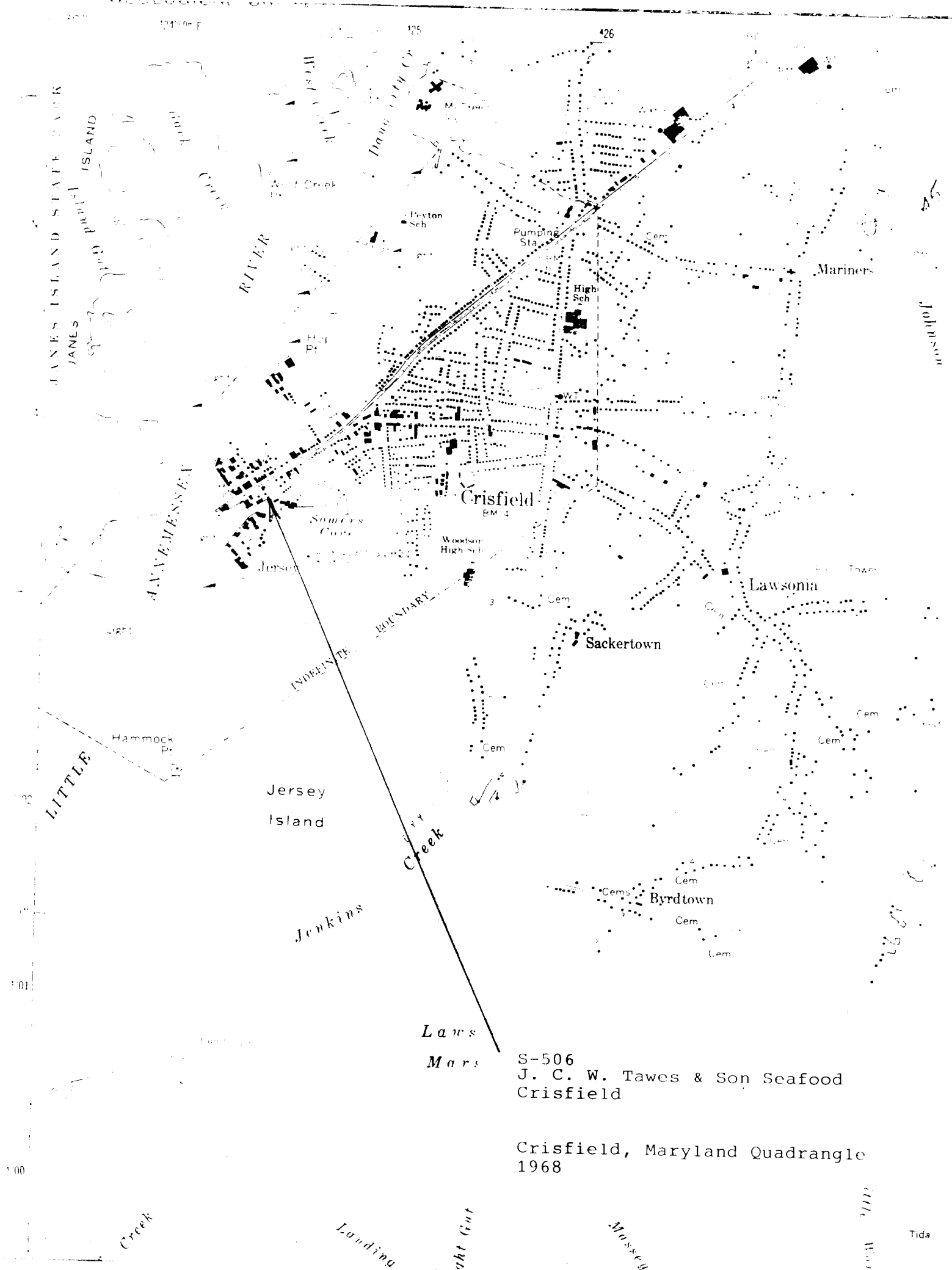




S-506, J.C.W. Tawes Seafood
Sanborn Insurance Map, 1911

ST.





S-506
J. C. W. Tawes & Son Seafood
Crisfield

Crisfield, Maryland Quadrangle
1968



9-506

L. C. W. TAMES SERRON CO.

CRISMAN, SERRON CO., MD.

SOUTHEAST ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TAMES, PHOTOGRAPHER

N.Y. / MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

1 OF 7



JONES
LIVE & STREAMED CHAIRS
212-444-1188

Shared

S-506

J. C. W. TAMES Searched

CRISFIELD, SOMERSET Co, MD.

South ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TOWANT PHOTOGRAPHED
NEB / MID HISTORICAL TRUST

2 of 7



S-506

J. C. W. TAMES SEARSON

CRISFIELD, SOMERSET CO., MD.

SOUTHWEST ELEVATION

1/2012, PAUL TOWNSEND, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEC./MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

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S-506

✓, C. W. TANES STATION

CRISTINA, SOMERSET Co., MD.

WEST ELEVATION

1/2002, PAUL TOWNAT, PHOTOGRAPHER

NAT/MO. HISTORICAL TRUST

4 or 7



4-506

J. C. W. TAYLOR SEAFOOD

CRISFIELD, SUMMERS CO., MD.

PICKING ROOM

1/2002, PAUL TOWNS, PHOTOGRAPHER

NEG. / MD HISTORICAL TRUST

5 OF 7



5-506

L. C. W. TAMES SENIOR

CRISTINA, SOUTHERN CO., MD.

CANNING ROOM WITH COOLER

1/2002, PAUL TONNET, PHOTOGRAPHY

NEE / MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

6 or 7



S-506

J. C. W. TAVES SEAFOOD
CRISWICK, SOMERSET G. MD.
STEAM ROOM

1/2002, PAUL TOWN, PHOTOGRAPHER
NEH / MD. HISTORICAL TRUST
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